



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 8

MARCH 6, 2009

Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Stonecipher offers ideas to balance budget



Olympia—Yesterday Representative Bailey Stonecipher met with the House Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Rep. Stonecipher, who called for a temporary increase in the sales tax to raise \$200 million. “The sales tax has not been increased since the 1980s and this 0.1 percent will not have a dramatic effect on purchases made by our citizens.” Stonecipher also called for a 50 cent increase in the cigarette tax, raising \$206 million. “Because of the addictive nature of nicotine, the very modest increase in price should not deter customers from purchasing cigarettes.” Several other budget packages are still to be voted on.

Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included academic requirements for high school athletes, cyberbullying, high school start times, and childhood obesity.

Tired teenagers to see later school start times

Olympia – House Bill 1555 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Hannah Nelson and Jayla Mills. “This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprived teenagers and will require all public high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.,” said Rep. Nelson. This bill was created to improve the academic success of teens. “It has actually been proven that the natural tendency of teens is to stay up later at night and wake up later in the morning. Their biological clocks are set differently than adults and younger kids,” said Rep. Mills. By requiring high schools to start later, the health and education of the students should improve, not to mention the complaints of exhaustion parents and teachers hear each day.



Mock committees debate, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and "committee members," governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A "DO PASS" or "DO NOT PASS" recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.



Bill redefines death penalty

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Kumayl Bokhari and Aaron Daly. "This bill ad-



dresses the issue of the death penalty and will ensure that innocent people are not executed," said Rep. Daly. "In the past some inmates have been put to death and then new evidence is discovered that proves they didn't do the crime," said Rep. Bokari. "This bill has been introduced to prevent this kind of

atrocities from happening," said Rep. Daly. Since 1981 in the state of Washington, 20 of 33 death sentences have been overturned for a life sentence. Nine inmates are currently on death row. In order to prevent innocent people from being executed, this bill requires that no death penalty can be given without hard DNA evidence proving that the person committed the aggravated felony.

Reps aim to stop dog attacks

Olympia – House Bill 3333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives David Charba and Analise Moreau. "This bill addresses the issue of dangerous dogs and will keep the area dramatically safer from dog attacks," said Rep. Charba. Research shows that the amount of dog attacks increase when people do not have their dogs on leashes. "Neighbors and innocent people are



hurt when owners don't take responsibility for their animals," said Rep. Moreau. To keep communities safe, the legislature will require all dogs to be on a leash when in public if this bill becomes law. Dog owners must also provide a fenced area if a dog is on the family property. A \$50 fine will be levied for any dog owner who violates the law, with increases for a second offense. Dangerous dogs who attack citizens will be put down.

Lower age for orders of protection advocated

Olympia – House Bill 2050 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Kaylea Bridwell and Mattie Orme.



"This bill addresses the issue of teen victims of dating violence and will provide protection to all teens who have been abused, not just those who are 16 or older. It also adds new categories of abuse for orders of protection and includes verbal and emotional abuse to the current sexual and physical abuse violence," said Rep. Bridwell. Dating violence, also known as relationship abuse, is a pattern of over-controlling behavior that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend. Rep. Orme says, "Emotional and mental abuse can be just as traumatic as the physical aspects." This bill will not cost the tax payers any money and will provide a safety net to all teens who have been or currently are victims of dating violence and abuse.

Athletes required to have good grades



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Lauren Epperson and Hailey Beres introduced House Bill 1000, which addresses the issue of high school athletic eligibility. "The bill is a good one because it will improve the education for high school athletes and create consistency in all school dis-

tricts," said Rep. Epperson. Many feel that school sports are a privilege and that education is more important. If this bill becomes law, all student athletes in public high schools will be required to earn passing grades to participate in games. "They may turn out for a sport and practice with their teammates, but if they have any failing grades, they may not play until the grades are brought up," said Rep. Beres.

Senators address plastic bag epidemic



Olympia – Senate Bill 5404 was introduced yesterday by Senators Meagan O'Keefe and Hannah Bell. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bags in our environment and will help us clean up landfills and protect wildlife,”

said Sen. Bell. “Marine animals are especially vulnerable to plastic bags that get dumped onto beaches or find their way into our waters,” said Sen. O'Keefe. One news article reported that a whale ate a plastic bag thinking it was a jelly fish and died. Other evidence shows that it takes 1,000 years for a plastic bag to decompose. Over 100 billion plastic bags are thrown out each year and most bags don't even make it to a recycling bin. The plastic eventually breaks down into tiny particles that contaminate soil and water ways. If this measure becomes law, grocery stores will be required to stop offering plastic bags and must provide reusable bags for purchase by customers by 2010.

Salad bars to replace candy bars



Olympia – Senate Bill 5000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Brooke Bridges and Mihkaela Overbay. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will improve the health of our

children,” said Sen. Bridges. Childhood obesity, a condition that often leads to health problems, is becoming more common. Children are not receiving enough physical exercise and do not get the recommended servings of fruit or vegetables, according to recent reports. If this bill becomes law, the legislature will establish a school diet plan to include 150 minutes of PE in elementary schools and 250 minutes for middle and high school students. Healthier offerings such as salad bars will also be added to the school lunch program.

Cut-off week finalizes fiscal legislation in houses of origin

This week all **fiscal bills** had to be voted out of their house of origin committees by Monday evening, and legislators were busy in floor sessions and caucuses making last minutes decisions and changes on those bills. Pages got a first-hand look at how parliamentary procedure is used by legislators on the floor of each chamber as they consider the money bills. Over 2,000 bills will be introduced in the two chambers this session, but only about 15-20 percent will actually make it to the end of the law-making process. Pages were busy on the floors of both the

House and the Senate, delivering documents, listening to their legislators express their views and watching the voting process. Next week, all **policy bills** will need to be voted out of their houses of origin. For the remainder of the session, all bills will be transferred to the opposing chamber for hearings and deliberation. Bills which make it out of the remaining chambers will be sent to the Governor for her approval. The session is scheduled to end on Sunday, April 26.

Senators ax services, tax citizens



Olympia—Yesterday, the Senate Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Senators Katie Bail-Burnside, Summer Carney, Victoria Cleveland, Olga Pilipchuk, Madelaine Merrill, Mark Larkin, Austin Vaarvik, Sarah Kodama, Adera Gandy, Glorian Bonnette, Ruby Machado, Michael Turner, and Alicia Williams regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We want to cause as little suffering as possible, but we are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we've seen in decades,” said Sen. Turner. Among the list of cuts offered were reducing state employee salaries by 5 percent, eliminating additional class-size reduction funds, closing the state film office, and reducing spending on goods and services by 25 percent. “In difficult economic times, everyone must take some kind of hit,” said Sen. Larkin. “A 5 percent reduction is a small sacrifice for most state employees, and we can use the money for those programs that help people who have no job at all.”

Many senators felt that the cut to goods and services was doable and would set a good example for citizens. “Cutting the amount of money appropriated for supplies such as paper and staples and services such as janitorial cleaning would save the state \$200 million, and since many families are being forced to tighten their budgets, the state should as well,” said Sen. Machado.





Spending \$140 million to reduce class size in public schools was not seen as a major help to most teachers in the state by Sen. Gandy. "The size of most classes would only be reduced by one student, an insignificant amount

to make much of a difference."

Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the committee saw a need to add some new revenue. "Our deficit is too big to create a balanced budget through cuts only," said Sen. Bail-Burnside. "Unfortunately, we are going to have to send a tax package to the voters to recoup our losses."

Sen. Bonnette, Sen. Cleveland and Sen. Carney were all supportive of a temporary increase in the sales tax but could not agree on the amount. Both Sen. Carney and Sen. Bonnette wanted a one percent increase to raise \$2 billion, but Sen. Cleveland advocated a more conservative .5 percent raise. "Our sales tax hasn't been raised in over 20 years, and I think people will hardly feel the pinch," said Sen. Carney. Other items slated for a tax are soft drinks and cigarettes. "A five cent tax on a can of soda will bring in \$272 million and is such a modest increase that no one will even notice," said Sen. Cleveland. Sen. Bonnette rationalized the 50 cent increase in cigarettes. "People will continue to purchase soft drinks because they are popular and sold everywhere. We can realize another \$206 million over two years with this tax."



The most controversial suggestion offered to balance the budget came from Sen. Merrill who proposed that the state legalize gambling. "While this might negatively impact the Indian tribal casinos, legalizing slot machines and 'quick-draw keno' off the reservations would be more fair to state businesses who currently are not allowed to provide these recreational opportunities," said Sen. Merrill.

Bill helps create healthier kids



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Ryan Toombs introduced House Bill 2011, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity. "The bill is a good one because it will help our children become healthier," said Rep. Toombs. A study found that 80 percent of chil-

dren who were overweight at ages 10-15 years were obese adults at age 25. Washington State spends \$1.3 billion on health care costs related to obesity. Between 20 and 24 percent of people in Washington are obese. The bill provides for salad bars in all schools, an increase in physical exercise in elementary school and healthier food selections in middle and high school vending machines.

Guest speakers visit Page School

Rep. Deb Wallace (D-17th), local political journalist Adam Wilson, and session aides Len-non Bronsema (Speaker Frank Chopp) and Kristi Moore (Sen. Steve Hobbs) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.



Brotherton advocates higher pay for pages



Olympia – House Bill 1866 was introduced yesterday by Representative Tanner Brotherton. "This bill addresses the issue of weekly page stipends and will increase their pay to meet the state minimum wage," said Rep. Tanner. The Washington State

pages are only being paid \$35 a day, approximately \$4 an hour. Current law sets \$8.55 as the minimum wage for a 16-17 year old employee. Sixteen-year-olds are allowed to be paid 85 percent of the adult minimum. "Pages who have to pay for housing and gas don't have much money left over for themselves," said Rep. Brotherton, "This bill will fix that."

Cyberbullying web site established

Olympia – Senate Bill 6789 was introduced yesterday by Senators Conner Sigmon, Dale Oquist, and Chad Thomas. “This bill addresses the issue of cyberbullying and will catch and punish those involved,” said Sen. Sigmon. Bill 6789 establishes a website where cyberbullying victims can report being bullied on the Internet. The Washington State Patrol task force will locate and prosecute cyberbullies in Washington. This bill was inspired by a 2006 incident where Meagan Meier, 13, hung herself after being taunted by “Josh” a fake Myspace person.



Young hunters must be supervised

Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Senator Jordan Wyman. “This bill addresses the issue of juvenile hunting restrictions and will reduce the amount of hunting accidents in Washington State,” said Sen. Wyman. The bill is a result of a recent incident in which an unaccompanied 14-year-old hunter accidentally shot and killed a hiker. Currently there is no minimum hunting age in Washington State. This bill would propose that hunters under the age of 21 must be accompanied by an adult and have taken and passed a hunter’s training class. “Hopefully, there will be no more tragedies like the one we experienced this past fall,” said Sen. Wyman.



Death with dignity law is questioned

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Peter Nelson introduced Senate Bill 5555, which addresses the issue of the recently enacted assisted suicide law. “The bill is a good one because it takes away the pressure some people feel to end their lives,” said Sen. Nelson. Under the current law, a spouse or family member need not be consulted before a terminally ill patient takes a lethal drug to end his life. Studies show that many people feel lonely, sad and/or depressed when they are terminally ill. “A cry for help may be mistaken as a request for assisted suicide,” said Sen. Nelson. “It is possible that people might feel pressured to take the drugs because they feel they are a financial burden to their families.” In Oregon, the only other state where this law is in effect, it was found that an insurance company would not pay for expensive drugs to keep a terminally ill person alive, but they would suggest that the inexpensive drugs to end the person’s life would be supplied. “This is immoral,” said Sen. Nelson.



Theory of Evolution challenged by state legislators



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Nathan Perry and Bodie Brusett introduced House Bill 2222, which addresses the issue of only teaching the Theory of Evolution in schools. “The bill is a good one because it will give students other options to help explain how our world came to be,” said Rep. Brusett. In many of Washington’s public schools, the Theory of Evolution is being taught as the only reasonable way that human life could have begun. “We believe that students should also be introduced to other theories, such as Intelligent Design. They can then decide for themselves which one of the theories they believe to be true,” said Rep. Perry. This bill would require schools to replace current textbooks with those that show other reasonable explanations in an unbiased way. This would encourage students to evaluate each of the arguments and provide a more thorough education, according to the representatives.



Teske supports abortion restrictions

Olympia – House Bill 2009 was introduced yesterday by Representative Anna Teske. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will reduce the number of fetus deaths,” said Rep. Teske. “Some people feel that it is too easy to get an abortion in Washington State. Abortion is a killer, so if the procedure becomes more difficult to have done then it will reduce the number of abortions in Washington State,” said Rep. Teske. Currently there are no restrictions in the state. If this bill becomes law, the legislature will require parental consent for minors to obtain an abortion and informed consent for anyone else.



Sleep-deprived students may get to sleep in



Olympia – House Bill 1928 was introduced yesterday by Representative Morgan Earsley. “This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprived students and will require that no public school will start before 8:30 a.m.,” said Rep. Earsley. When the Minneapolis school district changed its starting time from 7:30 to 8:40, it reported less depression, absences, tiredness, and drop

outs in its students. “With a later start time, students will be more alert and their academics will improve,” said Rep. Earsley.

Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist.

Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Washington. “I really enjoy facilitating learning and watching those light bulbs go off each week,” said Matt, as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify



about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.

Competitive edge results in *Jeopardy* win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional..



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/

